

Der Hofnarr

Clad in black doublet and golden foolscap, a peculiar person wanders about. He looks with dreamy gaze into a distance visible only to him. Slowly he passes by the guests of a party or gala and seems not to notice their sometimes favorable, sometimes derogatory comments. Devoid of all conviviality, he walks onward in solitude until suddenly his eyes widen and he rudely intrudes into an ongoing conversation.

After this first faux pas, he conducts continuous sorties across the established borders of convention. He speaks loudly, speaks softly. Now he leaps, now he tiptoes towards the expectant guests. His conduct is unpredictable, his character puzzling. With child-like innocence he points out to his fellow fools a rift in their behavior, a contradiction between their treasured self-image and their actual nature, and through his mischievous frankness leads them to laugh at themselves.



This game is played with reference to quite concrete things: for example, the headdress that for him is not at all extraordinary. He is often informed that in this day and age no one wears such finery. He shakes his bells in disbelief and asks what his conversation partner him- or herself has up on top. Quickly comes the self-evident answer: "Nothing," even more quickly the incontrovertible quip: "Exactly! At least with me a bell rings..."

George
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His barbed simplicity exposes foregone conclusions to be forlorn assumptions. Categories such as "suitable" or "inappropriate" turn out to be arbitrary mirages whose demise reveals a realm of hilarity and rollicking role-play. Guests enthusiastically take on an unabashed point of view and discover plays on words everywhere in a native language rendered newly vivid. Nonsense suddenly makes sense, makes for a good time.

Nimbly the jester leads his lords and ladies in a round dance of ridiculousness. His own body language expresses this unruliness with sometimes limp, sometimes fidgeting limbs which maintain a constantly flowing and precarious balance. He knows that human identity has no distinct outlines but is subject to ceaseless transformation. In his admixture of wandering thoughts and terse wisdom, he recognizes how insistent is self-delusion: "A fool's bell is soon rung."

Conversations with the guests take place in German, English, French and Italian, with a linguistic command that is not halting and fragmentary, but instead fluent and rich in expressive vocabulary.